DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 217 503 CS 503 858

AUTHOR Logue, Brenda J.; Verch, Stephen L.
TITLE An Empirical Analysis of the Value Debate Phenomenon.
PUB DATE May 82
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (Hartford, CT, May 6-9, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Research; Comparative Analysis; *Competition; *Debate; Higher Education; *Participant Satisfaction; Speech Communication; *Student Attitudes; Student Participation; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Cross Examination Debate Association; *Debate Tournaments; National Debate Tournament

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of students participating in the 1982 Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) tournament to uncover the reasons why they were competing in CEDA, whether they had ever participated in the National Debate Tournament (NDT), and which style of debate they preferred. Of the 133 respondents, 83 males and 50 females, 42% indicated that they had debated in both CEDA and NDT. Of those who had participated in both types of debate, 68% preferred CEDA. The remaining respondents had competed only in CEDA, preferred individual events to debate, or preferred NDT to CEDA without indicating a college background in NDT. The three major reasons given for participating in CEDA were (1) personal preference, (2) the respondent's debate coach asked him or her to try CEDA, and (3) it was the only form of debate at the respondent's school. Over half of the students provided other reasons for competing in CEDA, including development of communication skills, less time committed to research, partner problems, and enhancement of logical and analytical abilities. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED217503

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Brenda J. Logue

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

An Empirical Analysis of the Value Debate Phenomenon*

Brenda J. Logue
Towson State University

Stephen L. Verch
University of Tennessee

"Most of us are very dependent on our students -- as we should be."
--Robert D. Marcus, provost Rollins College (1982)

As some debate coaches discuss ways to attract students and forensic programs to NDT, many Eastern competitors have taken up Parliamentary style debate (Time, 1982) and nationally even more have joined the ranks of CEDA, the Cross Examination Debate Association. This paper will examine the background and philosophy of CEDA and the perspectives of a selected group of students toward CEDA and NDT.

The Status Quo of CEDA: Background and Philosophy

Since numerous authors (Howe, 1981; Kelley, 1981; Tomlinson, 1981) have already written of the background and philosophy of CEDA, this section will serve only as a brief orientation to a style of debate originating in 1971. Conceived by Dr. Jack Howe and initially known as the Southwest Cross-Examination Debate Association, CEDA has in a decade grown from a regional organization to a national association with 240 college members located in 42 states. This membership is an increase of 34.4 percent over the 1980-81 season, which has a similar expanse (35 percent) over the previous year.

CS 5 A32 SP

*A paper presented at the Eastern Communication Association Convention, Hartford, Connecticut, May 7, 1982.

NDT subscribers as of November 1981 were 185. Although it was reported at the Northwestern NDT meeting that subscribers had picked up,[1] it was also noted that "many current subscribers are non-NDT participating schools" (Pfau, 1982). CEDA recorded 239 colleges and universities actually participating in at least one tournament during the 1981-82 season.

There is little question that CEDA "fills a need for an alternative form of debate to NDT debate" (Swanson, 1981). Howe (1981) wrote that "CEDA began as a reaction against a prevailing style of debate that both participants and their directors found increasingly difficult to support" (p. 1). The basic objectives of CEDA are outlined below (Tomlinson, 1981):

1. To seek a method of restoring a better balance among evidentiary support, sound analysis, and effective delivery in debate than is currently encouraged by national propositions that emphasis evidence almost to the exclusion of these other areas.

2. To provide the opportunity for diversifying a student's collegiate experience by making available the cross-examination format and by offering topics in addition to the national propositions.

3. To try and arouse an interest in debate among college students for whom a current national topic might have little appear, by furnishing them with an alternative which may be more timely and interesting.

4. To create a healthy rivalry among debate squads, as opposed to that between individual teams, as schools compete in the standings for national sweepstakes awards at the end of the season.

These objectives have resulted in some distinct differences between NDT and CEDA: 1) NDT recognizes one national championship team, whereas CEDA awards a national sweepstakes to an entire debate squad; 2) NDT has one policy topic for an entire

[1]NDT had 218 subscribers in 1981-82 (Hazen, 1982).

season, whereas CEDA provides a different value topic each term (however, in its infancy CEDA had policy topics); 3) NDT has the tendency to worship volumes of evidence, rapid delivery and the spread, whereas CEDA emphasizes sound analysis and reasoning, with a judicious use of evidence, and an audience-centered communicative style; 4) NDT has accepted the squirrel approach to the topic (one example can justify the broad topic), whereas CEDA has encouraged the debating of the resolution as a whole. Despite the attempt to remedy some of the unacceptable NDT practices, some CEDA teams are now regressing (or imitating the NDT "standard") of evidence duels, 2NC spreads, rapid delivery, and narrow case interpretations of the resolution.

While concerned CEDA coaches worry about becoming like NDT, some NDT coaches worry about declining appeal. At the February NDT meeting at Northwestern, some NDT coaches were recorded (Pfau, 1982) as commenting: "CEDA has a genuine interest for spectators; NDT doesn't"; "There are as many students participating in debate today; they just aren't doing it the same way anymore. The problem is the decrease in NDT teams"; "The problem isn't CEDA; it is us. We are turning out kids into technicians. Judges are viewed as 'dicta-phones.' It's a race. If the judge can't keep up, then he's not a top NDT judge"; "We know what the problems are -- bizarre cases, warp speed. The question is, What are we going to do about it?" "Students learn debate by imitation. This is a bad environment, especially the high school debaters who 'ape' the colleges." "The issue is how to make the activity more attractive to students."

From the coaching perspective, we can sit back and analyze what our students are gaining from the forensic activity as well as what they want in an extracurricular debate activity. But it makes more sense (as marketing specialists well know) to go to the consumer to find out what is wanted and preferred in the product. What will sell? We as debate coaches are "very dependent on our students." Without debaters, our funds, trips, and glory would soon evaporate. With this philosophy in mind and being unaware of a similar debaters' questionnaire, we decided to survey debaters concerning their preferences between NDT and CEDA.

Methodology and Results

A student survey was designed to uncover the reasons students were competing in CEDA, if they had ever done NDT, and which style of debate they preferred. The questionnaire was administered at the 1982 University of Nevada-Reno CEDA tournament, which had 94 teams -- the largest CEDA tournament to date. Of the 138 surveys completed (a 73.40 percent return rate), 133 were usable.

Males accounted for 62 percent of the respondents (83 subjects); female debaters comprised 38 percent of the population (50 subjects). Colleges and universities from 16 states were represented in the data. Students from California predominated with 30 responses, Washington with 22, Utah with 15, and Colorado with 12. There were 38 freshmen in the survey, 21 sophomores, 32 juniors, and 42 seniors.

Of the 133 respondents, 56 or 42.11 percent of the population indicated they had debated in both CEDA and NDT. Of those who

had done both types of debate, 18 persons or 32.14 percent preferred NDT to CEDA, while 38 Ss or 67.86 percent preferred CEDA to NDT. The remaining respondents either 1) had competed only in CEDA (61 subjects), 2) preferred individual events to debate (13 Ss), or 3) preferred NDT to CEDA without indicating a college background in NDT (3 Ss). Further analysis combined these 3 subjects with the 18 who preferred NDT to CEDA.

The frequency distribution of the reasons given for competing in CEDA are noted in Table 1. Students could have indicated more than one reason for doing CEDA.

Table 1

Reasons for Competing in CEDA

Based on Preferred Competitive Mode

Reason	Preferred Mode NDT	CEDA	Only CEDA	IE	Totals
1. CEDA is only form of debate at school	5	7	30	4	46
2. I have the option between CEDA & NDT	2	26	26	2	56
3. I receive a scholarship to debate	3	10	16	1	30
4. My coach asked me to debate CEDA	7	9	24	8	48
5. Other	12	15	34	7	68

The three reasons receiving substantial responses were 1) I have the option, but prefer CEDA (56 Ss or 42.11 percent); 2) My coach asked me to try CEDA (48 Ss or 36.09 percent); and 3) It is the only form of debate at my school (46 Ss or 34.59 percent).

Less than 25 percent of the students indicated they were debating CEDA because they were on scholarships.

Over half (51.11 percent) provided other reasons for competing in CEDA which included: development of communication skills (11 Ss); less time commitment to research (9 Ss); relevant, realistic (7 Ss); enhancement of logical/analytical abilities (7 Ss); enjoyment (7 Ss); partner problems (5 Ss).

Table 2 indicates reasons students prefer debating CEDA to NDT. More than one reason could have been provided.

Table 2

Reasons for Preferring CEDA

to NDT by Experience Mode

Reason	Experience Mode			
	Prefers IE	Done Both Prefers CEDA	Done Only CEDA	Totals
1. Prefer value topics to policy topics	8	23	33	64
2. More communication-oriented	8	30	46	84
3. Less emphasis on evidence	7	20	28	55
4. CEDA is easier	2	9	9	20
5. Program is nationally ranked	3	12	10	25
6. Other	7	12	23	40

Responses in Table 2 are from 111 competitors. Twelve of the respondents who preferred individual events to debate, but preferred CEDA to NDT, were included in the data, since they had completed this section of the questionnaire.

Eighty-four (or 75.68 percent) of the respondents preferred CEDA to NDT because of CEDA's communication-orientation; 57.66 percent preferred CEDA because of the value topic as opposed to the policy topic; and 49.55 percent preferred CEDA because there was less emphasis on evidence. Suggesting that CEDA is an easier style of debate and that programs are ranked nationally were not major reasons for students preferring CEDA.

Other reasons given for CEDA's preference included: it is a realistic/relevant activity (8); it takes less time than NDT (7); the atmosphere is more pleasant (7); and logical/analytical skill development (5).

Although only 22 students preferred NDT to CEDA (one of these had ranked individual events over debate, but NDT to CEDA), it is perhaps worth noting their reasons for NDT's preference: NDT has more structure; it's clearer; set judging criteria (6); more theoretical positions (paradigms) available (3); it is more realistic/pragmatic (4); issues easier to deal with (2); prefer policy topics (2).

Discussion and Limitations of Survey

Of those students at the Reno tournament who had done both CEDA and NDT, approximately 68 percent had a preference for CEDA. It might be argued that because the Reno tournament is the culmination of the CEDA season, more diehard CEDA debaters were at this tournament, and this certainly is a valid criticism. Had this survey been circulated at the National NDT tournament in Tallahassee the same weekend as Reno, might a reverse trend have resulted? The inability to answer this question, is a definite

weakness of the current investigation. It would, however, be our guess that few diehard NDT debaters have ever competed in CEDA; but this is merely our assertion.

Nonetheless, it might well be that a large Western tournament, such as Reno, would be one of the most representative tournaments in finding a hybrid debater with both NDT and CEDA, since the further East one travels, the fewer CEDA programs. It would be our recommendation that this initial study be replicated at other tournaments to find if those debaters with both debate experiences maintain a preference for CEDA.

It would appear that students are competing in CEDA for a wide variety or reasons, with many of them (42.11 percent having the option to do NDT, but preferring CEDA. In another section of the questionnaire, debaters were asked if their college offered CEDA, NDT and/or individual events. In this area, 64 respondents or 48.12 percent of the population indicated that both forms of debate were available to them. The difference in percentage (6 percent) might mean that the option to do CEDA or NDT for some is not the reason for their competing. This option statement ("I have the option to debate NDT or CEDA, but prefer CEDA") might merely be a statement of fact or preference unrelated to their motivation for electing to compete in CEDA. The survey instrument might better be revised without this statement in the "reason" area.

Similarly, a difference appeared between those indicating that their school only offered CEDA (62 respondents or 46.61 percent) and this being the reason they are competing in CEDA,

which drops to 46 Ss or 34.59 percent of the respondents. The other reasons for competing in CEDA were fairly individualistic. Perhaps reinforcing the notion that individual debaters are in forensics for varying reasons.

Possibly worth mentioning is the fact that over one-third of those responding were competing because their coach had asked them to try CEDA. Certainly, this suggests the power of a request, if not the authority or position of the coach!

The three main reasons for CEDA's preference over NDT for students support the original objectives of the organization: more communicatively-oriented, the value topic and less emphasis on evidence. Since over three-fourths of the respondents preferred the communication aspect of CEDA, this factor should be preserved and highly regarded as a foundation for the association. Interestingly, the national ranking of programs is not a major reason for students' preferences for the activity. Could this invention be more geared to the coaches' need for achievement, publicity and recognition as opposed to the students' needs? A survey of coaches' preferences for CEDA might be enlightening. Another analysis might also be revealing in terms of what students prefer about value topics? Do they prefer two topics per year instead of one?

With only 22 debaters preferring NDT to CEDA, drawing any conclusions would be questionable. A wider sample is justified in determining if students (and coaches) prefer NDT basically because of its established game rules, whereas CEDA's voting issues are in the developmental stages. With only 2 of the 22

noting that policy topics were preferred, the nature of the topic may not be the deciding preferential factor.

Overall, the survey instrument is in need of refinement. There were considerable overlaps between reasons for debating CEDA and preferences for CEDA. A Likert scale approach might also provide more insight into student preferences.

Conclusion

As CEDA continues to expand eastward, it is important to examine why students who have the opportunity to do both CEDA and NDT are choosing and prefer CEDA as an alternative. Certainly the coaches have the insight, experience, and authority to direct their programs as they see fit in the best interests of their students and colleges. But ultimately who will determine the success or failure of that program's direction will be the students who go out into the trenches and debate. If students see value in a debate activity which is communication-oriented, then CEDA's objectives will continue to be realized and NDT could learn a valuable lesson. If students and coaches see only the value of winning at the expense of intelligent speech and hours of unending research, then CEDA too will go the way that NDT appears to have gone -- with the NDT generals meeting at the Northwestern summit wondering "where have all the soldiers gone."

Bibliography

Hazen, M. Phone conversation, April 27, 1982.

Howe, J. H. CEDA's objectives: Lest we forget. In D. Brownlee (Ed.), The philosophy & practice of CEDA, Cross Examination Debate Association, 1981.

Kelley, B. M. An alternative to NDT debate. In D. Brownlee (Ed.), The philosophy & practice of CEDA, Cross Examination Association, 1981.

Marcus, R. D. Undergraduates can stand the heat, so let them into the kitchen. Chronicle of Higher Education, April 14, 1982, p. 56.

Pfau, M. Minutes of open NDT meeting. Northwestern University, February 12, 1982.

Swanson, D. R. Reflections on CEDA debate -- 1980-81. In D. Brownlee (Ed.), The philosophy & practice of CEDA, Cross Examination Debate Association, 1981.

Time, In New Jersey: The best and the glibbest. March 15, 1982, p. 10.

Tomlinson, J. E. A rationale for developing a CEDA program. In D. Brownlee (Ed.), The philosophy & practice of CEDA, Cross Examination Debate Association, 1981.